2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Minghajr qaddisin ma titlax il-ġenna

You can't get to heaven without saints
Maltese proverb

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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CHAPTER IV

The Basis of Leadership

The Maltese word for leader, *mexxej*, is seldom heard, and then only in reference to the leader of a political party. I once asked a parish priest who were the leaders of the village. He laughed and replied that there weren't any, because his parishioners did not like leaders. With the exception of the professionals and *il-puliti* from the towns, all the inhabitants of a village usually call one another by their Christian names and in general look upon each other as equals. This egalitarian outlook is compounded of many factors, of which the most important are similar occupation, standard of living and values, the detailed knowledge of each other's personal lives that comes with residence in a face-to-face community, and jealousy. Any person who attempts to lead or to try to start something new – such as a village playground – is derided. His true motive is seen as self aggrandizement and his enemies and envious neighbours are quick to point this out to others who may not have realized it. 'Envy follows the wise man like his shadow' (*L-ghira titrot wara l-gharef bhal dellu mieghu*), goes the Maltese proverb. Professionals and outsiders, especially if they are from the town, are occasionally able to start something new. Their social distance from most of the community protects them from the full impact of the envy and gossip which moulds so much of village life.

But in spite of the absence of official lay leaders and the conservative pressure of envy and gossip, there are a number of persons who have a greater say than others in the affairs of the community. They are able to do this by virtue of their social position, their occupation or office in one of the village associations or their influence with the parish priest. These persons, together with the parish priest, form the aggregate which can be said to run the affairs of the community. While there is no generic term for this aggregate, those who compose it are sometimes referred to as *il-kbarat*, 'the big ones', or more derogatively as

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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be successful in the field of village politics. From there he can move into national politics.

Traditionally, age was an important determinant of status. Age meant wisdom, experience and position at the head of a large family. The deference accorded to age is preserved in the proverb 'Heed well the words of the elders' (*Kliem ix-xih żomm fih*). But in a society where teenage sons work as skilled labourers, clerks and teachers while their fathers still farm or dig ditches, and where schoolboys read letters, newspapers and voting instructions to their illiterate parents, the words of the elders are often not heard. The social and cultural gap between the old and the young is wider now than it has been for many generations. Today leadership in the villages is in relatively young hands. Old parish registers support the memories of the present generation of elders that this has not always been the case.

Village sons who are professionals often become presidents of their local band clubs. Very often they no longer live in their native villages. Most marry town-bred girls from professional families who do not wish to leave their urban surroundings and friends to live amongst people they regard as their inferiors in every sense. Though village-born professionals find it convenient for business purposes to live in the town, most lawyers continue to practise in their native villages. But when they continue to reside in their villages, even though their social life and many of their business interests are oriented away from the community, they normally enjoy great prestige. This works to enlarge their professional clientele. These assets can easily be converted into political support, and many village doctors and lawyers have gone successfully into politics.

Dr. Farrugia of Kortin, the town's only lawyer and its leading citizen, is a case in point. A native of Kortin, he is the son of old Manwel, the retired teacher who runs the Good Friday procession. Of a relatively modest background, he married the daughter of the former lawyer in the village, and took over the latter's large practice when he died. Past president of both the football and social clubs, a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, he has been president of the band club for many years. He is also a successful politician at the national level.

Frequently the government District Medical Officers are the only professionals resident in the villages in which they work.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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208 578 665 795 walls and shouted at public meetings. Mintoff is portrayed as a Socialist devil working to give the islands over to Communism in the manner of Cuba's Castro. These are some typical examples of the ones that appeared on the blackboard outside the Kortin Catholic Action centre: 'Mintoff is the enemy of the Church', 'Nobody can serve both God and the Devil', ' "The Bishops are interfering in politics!" That is what Communists say,' and 'We don't want Communists among us!' In stating their case, Mintoff and his supporters did not mince words either, as the following slogans that appeared on the blackboard of the Kortin Labour Party club demonstrate: 'We want a chance in court about the $60,000 lie',[1] 'With the Papal flag in their hands and shouting for vengeance', 'A fish begins to stink from its head',[2] and 'In Gozo they told the women that we have tails.'

208 578 665 794 795 The popular slogan 'Either with the Bishop or against the Church!' sums up the uncompromising attitude of the Church. Most of the sanctions it has imposed have presented that choice to the people in unequivocal terms. Early in May 1961, shortly after the Labour leaders were interdicted, all Church lay societies were instructed to obtain from each member a pledge of his full and unqualified support for the Archbishop. Those that declined to give this were expelled from the society concerned and their names reported to the national office of Catholic Action. But a more drastic sanction was imposed a few weeks later. After the [783] [626] Executive of the Labour Party had invited the Archbishop and the Bishop of Gozo to debate their policy in public at a Labour rally in Cospicua, the Bishops replied to this insult by issuing a circular which declared it a mortal sin to print, write for, sell, buy, distribute or read the Labour Party newspapers. All confessors were instructed to put the necessary questions to their penitents.

578 665 794 795 [851] [608] Hence, to remain a Labour supporter, a person has to forego the Church sacraments that he has been brought up to believe vital to his happiness and spiritual salvation. This is a very serious choice for a practising Catholic, and before these sanctions were imposed, the Maltese were among the most devoutly Catholic people in the world. It has also meant that MLP supporters cannot

[1] This refers to the Archbishop's charge, made at a rally in March 1961, that Mintoff had received $61,000 from the allegedly Communist dominated Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, which the MLP had just joined.

[539] [2] A Maltese proverb meaning that corruption first becomes apparent among people in high places. This was presumably directed against the Archbishop.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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578 young, I cannot even vote in the next election. But I must think
665 of the future. I feel that Mintoff is doing what is right for Malta.
794 He helped the poor people when he made the government. The
795 Church fights Mintoff because she fears she will lose her privileges
829 and power if he wins, and that he will tax her property. The
[115] Church is in favour of keeping people ignorant, and limiting their education. Why? Because when people are educated they think for themselves and can judge. They no longer follow blindly. Besides, you should not take too seriously all this talk of Communism – they are products of this fight. In a fight, people use all means available.'

The street sweeper who was with us understood most of the conversation and shook his head in disagreement. His only comment was the proverb, 'A ship with two captains can't sail' (*Il-vapur biż-żewġ kaptani ma jimxiex*). At this every one in the shop nodded in agreement, for both Labour and Church supporters had different captains in mind. Those who support the Archbishop look to him as the leader of the Maltese people. They make little distinction between Church and State. Labour supporters, in contrast, make a clear distinction. Mintoff is their candidate for head of State, and since they see the Archbishop as interfering with their choice, they accuse him of reaching out to control both Church and State.

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II

578 At the village level, this conflict has brought about a bitter
665 division. All societies and groups which are not formally identi-
794 fied with one side or the other, have been divided and weakened
[793] by politically based factions. The parish priest is the leader of those who support the Archbishop. His most enthusiastic followers are the clergy and the members of the lay societies. This group, with the other prominent villagers who make up the parish priest's circle, provide the hard core of the active opposition to the MLP. Considering the offices that they occupy and the societies to which they belong, it could hardly be otherwise. They usually meet in the club houses of the societies, but sometimes the older members meet in a particular café.

The hard core of the Labour group is made up of the officers of the local MLP Committee and the members who openly frequent the club. There is very little contact between the leaders and

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Malta. He sees the patronage system in Spain as a pyramidal structure incorporating both the natural and the spiritual worlds. At the top is God, the supreme patron who is not dependent upon anyone. At the base are the persons who have no clients. Between these lowly clients and God there are many different ranks of patrons, each of whom has his own small pyramid of clients. They, in turn, are clients dependent upon other higher and more influential persons. The patrons of each rank form a group which asks favours from one another on behalf of their clients.

The intermediaries between man and God are the saints, who are closer to God than man is. A person who seeks to influence the decision of a higher authority similarly looks for a person who, by virtue of his kin relation or social position, is closer to the decision maker than he. In view of the functional similarity of saints to living patrons, it should not come as a surprise that the word for patron in Maltese is 'saint' (*qaddis*; plural *qaddisin*). Several proverbs underline the important role that patrons play in Maltese social life. Here are two: 'Without saints you can't get to heaven' (*Minghajr qaddisin ma titlax il-ġenna*); and 'You can do nothing without saints' (*Minghajr qaddisin ma taghmel xejn*). Another points to the fact that any patron-client relationship is not without obligation, even danger, for the client: 'He who fattens you will kill you' (*Min semmnek joqtlok*).

Who are these 'saints', these men of influence? For the most part they are people who have already been encountered, albeit in a slightly different capacity. They are the professionals, the civil servants and, in general, the wealthy and powerful. They are persons, respected for their education and social standing in the world outside the village, who can deal as equals with other important people and decision-makers, many of whom are their relatives and former classmates. Their patronage is sought by individuals and groups alike. They are often asked to become god-parents, and they are called on to handle the ceremonial, business and political relations of clubs. They are also called on to help secure employment, building permits, hawkers licences or a long-delayed hearing at the law courts. Generally speaking, villagers choose patrons from the circle of influential people with whom they have the closest contact: the local professionals, the parish priest and clergy, the important landlords, all of whom command respect outside the village. Some clients are related to their

5: Cremona B-3, 4 (no date) 1923
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Maltese Death, Mourning, and Funeral Customs.

764 Sir James Frazer's communication of a coroner's note about "Beliefs regarding Death in Cumberland"[1] has suggested to me that I might put on record Maltese funeral customs now extant, some of which are analogous to those noticed in Cumberland.

764 263 [184] [565] [171] Amongst our middle and lower classes the practice still lingers of placing a dish of salt on the stomach of the corpse, whether of a male or of a female. The popular belief in Malta is that the salt prevents early decomposition. Certeux and Carnoy[2] give the following interpretation of a practice by Arabs in Algeria: "*Il est de convenance religieuse . . . de lui poser sur le ventre* [of the dead person] *quelque chose de pesant, afin de prevenir le gonflement.*" [539] One of our Maltese sayings runs:

"*Imût il-ghani u jmut il-fqir*
It-tnejn jitmelhu ghal geûûa il-bir."

i.e. "Both the rich man and the poor man die, and both are salted for the pit" (a common rock tomb). This may, however, refer to the pickling or preservation of bodies in a saline solution.

764 The covering over of looking-glasses in the room where the body is lying is also practised by several Maltese families. Some go so far as to remove furniture, and turn round or take down pictures, in the death chamber and passages.

764 171 The following are the most characteristic features of existing Maltese practices, many of which are comparable to those of Sicily, while a few show some Eastern influence:—

(*a*) The washing of the dead body before shrouding. This is not a religious rite, and has no connection with that of Islam.

(*b*) The shutting of the eyelids, if open, and the raising of the chin by means of a band, usually a white kerchief, tied on the head.[3]

(*c*) The removal of door knockers and knobs; house doors are kept closed for several days; neighbours half-shut their own.

[1] Vol. xxxi., p. 154.

[2] *L'Algerie Traditionelle*, p. 223.

[3] This is practised in Algeria. See Certeux and Carnoy, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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is, they were wont to continue for 8 days, whereof the first and last were the prineipal; and you will find the 1st. of April the octave of the 25th of March, and the close or ending consequently of the feast. Hence it is supposed that the 1st. day of April became a day of extraordinary mirth and festivity, especially among the lower classes who are apt to pervert and make a bad use of institutions, which at first might have been very laudable in themselves.

A writer in "Poor Robin's Almanac" for 1760, gives the following metrical description of the modern fooleries on the 1st. of April, with the open avowal of being ignorant of their origin.

"The 1st. of April some do say
Is set apart for all Fools' day,
But why the people call it so

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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527 Nor I nor they themselves do know.
522 But on this day are people sent,
•539 On purpose for pure merriment,
And though the day is known before
Yet frequently there is great store
Of these forgetful to be found
Who are sent to dance *Moll*
Dixon's round.
And having tried each shop and stall
And disappointed at them all
At last some tells them of the cheat,
Then they return from the pursuit
And straight way home with shame they run
And others laugh at what is done,
But 'tis a thing to be disputed
Which is the greatest fool reputed,
The man that innocently went
Or he that him design'dly sent."

527 This custom of imposing upon each
522 other on the 1st day of April, and send-
171 ing one another upon frivolous, ridi-
culous and absurd errands, whatever
be its origin, appears to be universal
throughout Europe.

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
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538 the Arab domination. Jahan is merely a typically Maltese character placed in a series of foreign settings which have been changed to give an appearance of authenticity.

THE PEASANT AND THE SULTAN

• 539 From the familiar ground of Jahan's adventures it is a long step to the tale of "The Kaukam and the Kaukama." Here, again, is the typical Maltese hero who, by superior cunning, outwits the "Sultan"[1] who sets him, a poor peasant, a series of impossible tasks, but the atmosphere of the story is of the distant past.

> "Upon a time there was a peasant who loved his father as the light of his eyes. When the father became very old and decrepid, the son was obliged to do as everyone else did; he had to put his father into a cave-tomb; but he could not bring himself to block up the mouth of the cave. . . . He kept two holes. . . ."

The son then arranges to feed his father by leading his ewes to the cave, so that the old man may suck their milk through one of the holes.[2]

539 888 It has been suggested that the burial of the aged father who is kept alive and his advice sought is nothing more than a tradition of oracular response from ancestral tombs. Although this is a reasonable enough theory, there seems no cause to doubt the possibility that the facts are exactly as stated. To this day primitive tribes get rid of their aged and infirm members, for obvious reasons. Respect for the wisdom and experience of the old men and women whose advice was sufficiently valuable

[192] [1] There is no Maltese word for "king," "ruler" or "governor." "Sultan" is used in folk-tales broadly to describe any person in authority. The Italian "re" is rarely used in the true vernacular.

[2] L. GALEA AND MARGARET A. MURRAY, *Maltese Folk Tales.*

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to justify the inconvenience of caring for them is a lesson which had to be learned. "Ghalec ma tridx tmut l'ghagiusa, ghax actar ma ticber izjed titghallem"—"The old woman does not want to die for the older she grows the more she learns"—is a common saying. For further proof that the story of the "Kaukam" has come down from very early times, there is the only other context in which the word *ghagiusa* means "an old woman" or, more accurately, "the oldest woman hereabouts" (normally the word means "a crab").

> "We have an old custom in Malta," says Bussutil,[1] "to make children believe that the ghagiusa is killed at noon on Thursday, the middle of Lent. Mothers, after fasting the first twenty days of Lent, send their children to the door of the parish church, or of some convent to see the sexton or some friar throwing the old woman from the steeple. . . ."

That the destruction of the old woman should occur in the middle of Lent—a period of fasting—is too much of a coincidence not to indicate that, in times when food was scarce, the aged folk were removed—either by being thrown from a high place or, to save the guilt of actual murder, walled up in a rock tomb, as in the case of the peasant. The association of the Church with the destruction of the *ghagiusa* suggests that in primitive times the removal of the aged was the responsibility of the pagan priests who performed the "ritual murders." These murders may have developed from a practical necessity into a sacrificial propitiation.

The story of the Kaukam takes its name from the ancient's first piece of advice to his perplexed son. Faced with the probability of losing his own crops while he cares for those of the Sultan, who has commanded that no man may plant his

[1] GALEA AND MURRAY, op. cit.

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•539 own fields until he has planted an equal number for the Sultan, he is told, in rhyming verse:

> Buy the Kaukama and the Kaukam
> Count not the cost.
> Feed the field with clover and lucerne
> So the plough may bury them deep.
> At night till your fields, by day the Sultan's.
> Without the Kaukam and the two Kaukama
> Nought will remain but the strength of your hands.

539 174 There is no one now who can say what they were that the peasant was to buy. The words have no longer any meaning. Can it be—for we have already seen that the story is of great antiquity—that the hero was the originator of draught oxen? Of the two words one would seem to be singular, the other plural. Perhaps the old man's advice to his son was to breed oxen for draught, known formerly only as food. The use of oxen for ploughing and threshing would have so lightened the peasant's labour as to make it possible for him to plant and tend the Sultan's fields as well as his own. That is what he succeeds in doing, with the aid of the mysterious "Kaukama and Kaukam," to the amazement and chagrin of the Sultan. "Without the Kaukam and the two Kaukama nought will remain but the strength of your hands" might reasonably read "Without the ox and the two she-oxen . . . ."

539 The Sultan is unwilling to be beaten by the peasant, and sets him more problems which place him repeatedly "within the onion" (Maltese for "the horns of a dilemma"). The old man, from his rock-tomb, furnishes the answer to every problem, and the peasant is at last forced to tell the Sultan his guilty secret.

> "The Sultan was highly delighted. . . . From this day forward no one shall bury either father or mother

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alive in a cave; for though the old man be useless for some things, yet they are always of use to give advice."[1]

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THE DRAGON SLAYER

The fair princess carried off by the dragon appears in the tale called "Pietru Lagrimanti," or "The Eighth Son." The Princess is married, by her own wish, to a prince with golden teeth. In order to escape being married she has persuaded her father that only a young man whose teeth are all of gold shall have her. Perhaps it is as a punishment for her undutiful bargain that the Evil One himself appears in this unlikely shape, and having married her carries her off to his dwelling in the depths of a mountain. Here are his former wives bewitched into the shapes of beasts and fast imprisoned within seven doors of iron.

The Evil One changes into his proper shape and becomes "Dragun Draganti"—"The Serpent of Serpents." From one of the bewitched ladies the princess learns that there are seven brothers, sons of a Wise Woman in her father's kingdom, who are able to release her if they will carefully carry out certain instructions. A dove carries a message to the Sultan who immediately seeks out the Wise Woman and orders her to send her seven wonderful sons to the aid of his daughter. If they fail they will die disgraceful deaths—presumably having "their skins made into doormats," a favourite punishment in the Maltese folk-tale. If they succeed they will be made rich for life. Though armed each with his own magic power—one miraculously keen sighted, another equally keen of hearing, the third wonderfully strong, the fourth able "to steal the eggs from a sitting hen without her feeling anything," the fifth able "to lift up sleeping people without their waking," the sixth "able to build a tower of bronze in an instant"—the seven champions rescue the princess, only to be pursued by

[1] GALEA AND MURRAY, op. cit.

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• 539 the "Dragun Draganti," captured, and turned into beasts. For they omit to pronounce the spell which will restore the bewitched prisoners to their human shape. The recaptured princess spends several more years in captivity. One day the Evil One, who is not unkind to her, for he "truly loves her," tells her:

> ". . . There is only one person who can deliver you, and he is not born yet. He will be called Pietru Lagrimanti (Peter of Tears), and he will be the brother of the seven men who are turned into mules. But after he has killed me and smashed me up, if he does not burn my body completely, I shall throw myself into the pool of the Water of Life, and I shall rise again from the dead. That accursed one shall come into the world from his mother's tears."

The princess contrives to convey this information to her father, who again seeks out the Wise Woman.

> "The widow was so divided between sorrow that her seven sons had been turned into mules and joy that another son of hers would deliver his brothers and give them their human form again, that she burst into a torrent of tears, so great that there never was anything like it. She cried and she cried and she cried, and the King caught her tears in a golden cup and made her drink them.
>
> "In time her eighth son was born. When he was born he was enormously powerful, and could speak, but he was deformed with a head larger than his whole body. As soon as he was born the widow went and told the King, and the King returned with her to see the baby.
>
> As soon as the baby saw the King, he said, 'Give me some clothes.'

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'I have nothing to give you to put on,' said the King.

'Give me one of your shirts,' said the baby.

'It will be much too big for you,' said the King.

'Never mind, I can hold it up,' said the baby. So the King gave him one of his shirts.

'Now,' said the baby, 'I am ready to go and fetch your daughter.'

'O yes!' cried the King. 'Only tell me what you need and I will give it to you.'

'All I want,' said the baby, 'is a hammer, just a bit of a thing.'

The King showed him two or three hammers.

'No, no,' said the baby. 'Those won't do at all; I must have a bigger one, about nine kantars (a kantar is about a hundredweight) in weight.'

The King sent him to the dockyard with the guards, ordering them to obey the baby's commands. Everybody was bursting with laughter at the sight of the baby with his head bigger than his body and holding up his long shirt lest he should trip over it.

The baby made the people of the Dockyard show him hammers of all kinds, but he liked none of them. He looked about, here, there, and everywhere, his eyes shining, and at last he spied a great block of iron weighing nine kantars. He ordered that a hole should be bored through it and a handle made to carry it by.

'What do you want the handle of?' they asked.

'Of iron, so that it will be strong,' said the baby.

As soon as it was made he threw it across both his shoulders and went to the King.

'I am ready to start now,' he said."[1]

The miraculous dwarf, needless to say, rescues the prin-

[1] GALEA AND MURRAY, op. cit.

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539 cess and releases all the captives, including his seven elder brothers.

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171 This story bears traces of a number of legends. The princess may well be Summer, wedded to Autumn, the season with the golden teeth of ripe corn. Imprisoned throughout the winter, the failure of the seven brothers to rescue her may represent the brighter periods of the Maltese mid-winter, followed by the wild weather of early spring. The recurrence of the number seven, in the seven sons and the seven doors is interesting. Seven has always borne a sacred character. It is associated with Indra from whom the seven great rivers of Hindu mythology are supposed to flow. Ishtar or Astarte was clothed in seven garments and passed through seven gates when she descended into the Underworld. Certain details of ths Assyrian and Phoenician story of Ishtar's visit to the underworld suggest that the captive Princess is herself no other than that once powerful goddess whose temples are known to have existed in Malta. Ishtar, descending into the Land of Darkness is admitted on condition that at each of the seven gates she shall shed one of the seven mystic garments from which she draws her divine power. In the Maltese tale, the Evil One causes the princess to remove her shoes—for no reason that is now apparent. At last Ishtar stands before the Queen of the Underworld naked and helpless. She is stricken with all manner of diseases from which she recovers at last when a rescuer, created by her father, the God of Light, releases her and bathes her in the Waters of Life. In the Maltese version it is in connection with the serpent that the Waters of Life appear.

In detailing the attributes of Pietru's seven brothers, the story omits to give any special power to the seventh brother. It may be that there were originally only six brothers, making the monstrous child-hero one of those seven sons, world-renowned for their magic powers.

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Pietru Lagrimanti's strange birth has a parallel in Egyptian mythology, where a man is born of the tears of the deity Nu who personified the Celestial Ocean from which the life-force even of the gods themselves was drawn.

Armed with his great hammer, "Il Lagrimanti" resembles the Dragon Slayers of every mythology, from Bel-Marduk of the Assyrians to Thor of the Scandinavians and Finn M'Cull of the Celts; but he is sadly fallen from his high estate and become a figure of fun, with his huge head and his shirt too long for him. A primitive respect for deformity or else some modification of the monstrous shapes of a pagan Pantheon may account for the baby's misshapen figure. The long shirt has clearly been added to provide a comic figure of the sort dear to the Maltese sense of the ridiculous.

The stories of the Kaukam and of Pietru Lagrimanti are but two of many tales in which pursuit of the Old Things, through the labyrinth which time has built around them, is a fascinating pastime. Enough has been said to illustrate the way in which a tenacious handful of peasants has handed down, through the centuries, legends of great antiquity—in some cases nearly intact.

GROWN UP

The Maltese—a people as old as time—are a people who never grow up. In this lies their chief charm. For Zeppu the passing of childhood means only an understanding of the ancient price of manhood:

> "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken. . . ."

For Grez the flowering into womanhood brings only the divine command:

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> "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee. . . ."

In all other things they remain children and "of such is the Kingdom. . . ."

So that the curse of Adam may lie less heavily upon these children of an unfertile rock, the Old Things have blessed them with an uncanny ability to make flowering fields out of nothing.[1]

THE SKY AND THE SOIL

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The weather and husbandry lore of the peasant has much to do with the success of his untiring hands. Much of this peasant wisdom is incomprehensible to the town-bred Maltese (too often they have lost touch or dismiss it—in hybrid Italian—as *ignuranza*); much of it has exact parallels in the lore of the English countryside, as for example the following:

Maltese	*English*
821 171 "The Moon eats everything."	"Fair weather with a full moon."
● 539 "The stars wink at the coming wind."	"Twinkling stars foretell high winds."
"Sky like a turtle's back; heavy rains, fierce winds."	"A rounded cloud with flattened base carries rainfall in its face."
"Clouds with heads of men and beasts bring in the thunder and the lightning."	

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[1] During the early years of the last century Malta's cotton crop was valued at an average of one and a half millions sterling annually. The cotton industry, dating from Roman times and earlier, is now practically dead.

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Maltese	*English*
"Red sky at evening, harness your mules. Red sky at morning, herd your beasts."	"Red sky at night, Shepherd's delight. Red sky in the morning Shepherd's warning."
"Ill weather comes, ahead or astern, when the cat sneezes."	"The cat washes herself before stormy weather."

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Often it appears that sheer nonsense is mixed with sound common sense. Typical of the mixed "sense" and "nonsense" is the following:

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"The first autumnal produce of the wild fig is called by the Maltese *Barru*. A second crop which takes place in winter is supposed to be due to the outcome of the first produce. This is called *Carru*, and is supposed to bring forth the third outcrop which appears in spring time and is recognized as the *dukkar* or real fertilizer of the fig. This fruit is cut and hung up in pairs on the bough of the fig tree.

"The male fruit (*dukkar*) is usually full of a colony of minute winged insects by the produce of which, the Maltese husbandman identifies the real fertilizing fruit. [825]

"The pomegranate is supposed to be fertilized by the flowers of the wild parsnip, and for this purpose bunches of these flowers are thrown over the pomegranate tree when in flower. *Dakra*, probably from *dakar* = to fertilize, is the name given to the wild parsnip by the Maltese husbandman.

"The male flowers of the wild carob-tree (*baghal*) are thrown over the branches of the female plant to favour impregnation.

Small pieces of coarse stone are still hung up in the jujube-tree with a view to securing a good produce.

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of the eternal and immutable nature of the All-Father whose symbol the rock is.

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THE MONTHS

The Maltese, like the Scandinavians and the Russians, personify the months, giving to each a human character in keeping with its weather. A delightful little story called "The Gifts of the Months" serves the dual purpose of impressing the qualities of each month upon the listener, while stressing the importance of accepting the best qualities in every season without complaining about the disadvantages. Two brothers, one a poor peasant, the other a rich merchant, each meet the twelve months. On being questioned as to what people say about the months in his part of the country, the peasant recites a number of couplets in praise of each month:

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"'Friend,' said January, 'what do people say about January in your part of the world?'[1]

The poor man answered, 'It is a month of rain and of plenty. Vegetables grow and all that your heart can desire.'

'Do you know any rhymes about it?' asked January.

'Just imagine asking!' cried the poor man. 'As many as ever you like.'

'Tell me some, please,' said January.

The poor man then repeated the three following: 'January sits in the cosiest nook in the house. A warm January makes full barns in the summer. The January moon brings the girls out of the caves for they think it is daylight.'

January smiled and the others laughed. Then February took up the running. 'Friend, what do they say about February?'

[1] GALEA AND MURRAY, op. cit.

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'He is January's own brother, bless him,' said the poor man. 'Quantities of rain and everyone satisfied, for February fills up all and brings riches to the peasant's house. In the month of February all mistakes are discovered. In February sow, water, and tend the small-leaved basil.'

'What a lot you know!' they all cried.

'Friend,' said March, 'what about March?'

'Days long and beautiful,' answered the peasant. 'The cold braces you like iron, and a little wind is always desirable.'

The poor man answered in this way each question of the rest of the months, letting his tongue wag in their honour, praising each one up to the skies."

The merchant, in reply to the same set of questions, complains bitterly about each month. The peasant is given a magic cloth of the sort used to cover bread, which provides him and his family with food and drink in plenty. The rich merchant receives a stick which beats him and his wife unmercifully every time it is addressed.

824 787 Apart from the expected, usual characters of the twelve months, there is a method whereby the year's weather may be foretold. The twelve days preceding Christmas Eve are known as "presages." Each day foretells the weather of its corresponding month during the forthcoming year. Here, again, is seen the shadow of Mithra—the "Great Fecundator"—no period could be more ominous than the sacred twelve days preceding his feast.

FAITH

771 782 Where knowledge fails or some error in complying with the traditional rules is made, Faith steps in. A farmer will send for the village priest to bless his fields when he has sown

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we may safely assume that S. Paul's Aramaic was as comprehensible to them as was their related Phœnician to him.

There seems to be no evidence that this Semitic speech of the Maltese "barbarians" had been replaced by some other language when the Arabs seized the Maltese islands in 870. Many of the philologists therefore hold that on to this Punic stock the Arabs grafted, during the two hundred and twenty years of their occupation, a vocabulary of contemporary Arabic which did not completely oust words of the older, kindred stratum. These scholars consider that the dialect received, in fact, a second, fresher infusion from the same reservoir and that the resulting blend is the core of the Maltese language of to-day.

Inevitably, in the course of ages, this language has borrowed words from the languages and dialects of the other countries with which Malta has been connected—from Sicilian, from Aragonese, from Italian, from French, even from English—but it has always fitted such words into its own Semitic framework, has governed them according to the rules of its own Semitic grammar and mechanics. Thus the Maltese who have emigrated to Syria and to the north coast of Africa have no difficulty in making themselves understood by their Arabic-speaking neighbours, who for their part can make themselves readily understood in Malta. Here is the Lord's Prayer in Maltese, which I quote so that the reader unfamiliar with the language may see for himself what it looks like:

Missierna li inti fis-smewwiet,
Jitqaddes ismek,
Tigi saltnatek,
Ikun li trid Int, kif fis-sema hekda fl-art.

Hobzna ta' kull jum aghtina l-lum,
Ahfrilna dnubietna, bhalma nahfru lil min hu hati ghalina.
U la ddahhalniex fit-tigrib,
Izda ehlisna mid-deni. Hekk ikun.

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And here is another example, a translation by the late Sir Augustus Bartolo, scholar, historian, orator, staunch Imperialist and one of His Majesty's Judges in Malta, of the first verse of Longfellow's *Psalm of Life*, beginning with the familiar words "Tell me not, in mournful numbers":

Tghidulix li id-dinja hi holma,
Mhiex hlief frugha, u niket, u hemm;
Dak li jidher fil-wiċċ hu qarrieqi,
Ujekk torqod ir-ruh taghna tintemm.

The formal allocutions of the present Archbishop of Malta to his flock are headed as follows:

"MICHAEL GONZI
Ghall Grazzja t'Alla
U Tas-Sedi Apostolika
ARCISQOF TA' MALTA
SAHHA U BARKA"

(Michael Gonzi, by the Grace of God and the Apostolic See Archbishop of Malta, Greeting and Blessing.)

It doesn't really look much like a dialect of Italian, does it? Yet that is the impression which Mussolini's unscrupulous and efficient propaganda bureau determined to create in Italy. It set itself to convince the Italians that the Maltese were a branch of the Italian race and that their speech was an Italian dialect—a somewhat corrupt one, perhaps—which had absorbed during the Arab occupation of their islands a certain quantity of Arabic words. Fascist propaganda would draw a false and misleading analogy between Maltese and such Italian dialects as Sicilian, which, while Italian in grammar and structure, has incorporated Arabic words with its Italian vocabulary.

In point of fact Maltese is the converse of Sicilian, since it is an Oriental language that has absorbed non-Oriental words into its Semitic structure. But Mussolini and his agents, zealously directed by his son-in-law Ciano, succeeded in making large numbers of Italians believe quite honestly—